

RUTHERFORD'S PLANTERS' NOTE BOOK*

RUTHERFORD'S Planters' Note Book, of which the 9th edition has recently appeared, needs no introduction to the planters of Ceylon. The first edition was published in 1887, and the book has been ever since the standard reference work on planting and allied matters.

The addition of an advertisement to the cover has distinctly detracted from the appearance of the 9th edition.

On turning the cover the absence of a preface is noticed, so that not even a general acknowledgment is made to the numerous authors whose publications have been freely used throughout the book.

A table of contents indicating the subjects of the chapters would be a useful addition.

The first three chapters deal with land and survey, machinery, and buildings, and undoubtedly contain some of the most useful information in the book. These three chapters have been enlarged by 7, 14 and, 29 pages respectively, and, though much of the new matter is of undoubted value, there is a stage at which such material by increase of volume tends to lose its value as a reference work for the layman and assumes the character of a text-book for the expert.

The heading of the next chapter is "Miscellaneous" and it contains information on subjects as diverse as the removal of stains from clothing and the number of "Quadraat Duim" in a "Quadraat Voeten". It is an open question whether this chapter is needed. The general information can be found in a reference work such as a popular encyclopaedia, while the tables of weights and measures might perhaps be included in the chapter on land and survey, which already contains a number of such tables.

The chapter on labour contains an excellent and lucid summary of the system of recruiting now in force, the organisation of the Department of Indian Immigrant Labour and the Ceylon Labour Commission, and the general status of Indian labour on estates.

The chapter on tea lays itself open to a good deal of criticism, both as to balance and arrangement, and as to the selection of the matter inserted.

In dealing with the opening of tea clearings it is to be regretted that no mention is found of the possibility of contour planting, while the general question of soil erosion is largely ignored—the word erosion, in fact, does not even appear in the index! It is hoped that the 10th edition will contain extracts from the report of the Committee on Soil Erosion.

The statement on page 262 as to the toxic effect of grass must at least be considered as "non-proven."

In the sections which describe the operations of centring, it is noted that no mention is made of those methods of bringing young tea into bearing advocated by Mr. John Horsfall and others, although these methods have in the last few years achieved considerable publicity.

The section on manuring might perhaps be of more value if sample mixtures were quoted or, at all events, the quantities of nitrogen, phosphoric acid, and potash found in representative mixtures.

The section of green manuring is one of the most disappointing in the book. If "Buildings" and "Medical" are worth 103 pages each, surely green manuring is worth more than 2 pages? Apart from its inadequacy, this section contains some questionable statements. Both *Gliricidia maculata* and *Indigofera endecaphylla* (which is misspelt "endecopilla") are included in a paragraph headed *Shrubs*. This same paragraph of two and a half lines contains three spelling mistakes and three cases of the wrong use of capitals.

The paragraph on creepers mentions *Vigna oligosperma* and *Vigna hosei*, though these are one and the same plant, and its correct name is *Dolichos hosei*.

After the general article which is found at the beginning of the chapter a number of publications, or extracts from publications, of the Ceylon Department of Agriculture are inserted. It is obviously impossible to include publications dealing with every phase of tea planting and it is suggested that a preferable method would have been to enlist the services of an expert to contribute a concise article on each principal subject (as has been done in the case of rubber diseases). The officers of the Tea Research Institute suggest themselves in this connection—but the existence of the Tea Research Institute is not even mentioned in the book.

Moreover the publications chosen for inclusion do not always seem the most suitable. Thus, in dealing with Shot-hole borer, the whole or portions of publications issued in 1903 and 1918 are included but no mention is made of Bulletins 56, 72, or 78, published in 1922, 1925, and 1926 respectively. Again all the publications included deal with insect pests; diseases are somewhat inadequately dealt with in two pages, which incidentally contain further misspellings.

Manufacture is lucidly and concisely dealt with in a single article—the name of the author is not given.

The chapter on rubber starts with an interesting general article by Mr. E. C. Villers which is followed by extracts from Garnier's *Ceylon Rubber Planters' Manual*. In this chapter it is thought that the question of cover crops is not given the prominence it deserves. Only one ground cover plant is mentioned.

The inclusion of Mr. Denham Till's lecture on methods of opening rubber clearings is a wise step.

The wisdom of the selection of Department of Agriculture publications in this chapter may again be questioned. Bulletins 55, 68, and 77 all deal (under different titles) with the correlation between yield and various vegetative characters in a certain plot of rubber on the Experiment Station, Peradeniya. Extracts from Bulletin 68 are first given, then, after plunging into a number of other subjects, extracts from Bulletin 55 (the earliest one) are given twenty pages later. Bulletin 77 (the latest) is not mentioned at all. The other publications quoted are in some cases very old and more up-to-date literature on the same questions exists in plenty.

The section on manufacture starts with *The Occurrence of Bubbles in Sheet Rubber* followed by other extracts from publications dealing with problems of manufacture. One would have thought that a general description of manufacture would be a more appropriate beginning, but this only comes ten pages later when extracts from O'Brien's *Preparation of Plantation Rubber* are given. Practically all the information on rubber manufacture necessary for a book of this kind could have been obtained from this booklet and that the inclusion of Mr. L. M. W. Wilkin's article on smoked sheet which, though an excellent article, obviously goes back to the early days of sheet, was scarcely necessary.

The tables showing the percentage of profit on a rubber property at varying capital and yields will probably be hurriedly passed over in 1931.

The article on budding contains much interesting and useful information, though one or two statements call for some comment. Allusion is made to the choice between "seedlings and stumps" as stocks. Apart from the fact that the "Stump" so alluded to is a seedling, in practice a stumped seedling is practically never used. Again a geneticist would probably not accept as complete the statement that uneven results are obtained from planting seed of one tree because of "the varied pollination that takes place"; Self-fertilisation would not eliminate the mixed genetic heritage of the tree. Rejuvenation is dealt with, but complete replanting is not mentioned, though this is now usually considered the best course. The name of the author of this section is also not given.

Mr. Murray's comprehensive survey of rubber diseases is of the length and character desired for inclusion in a work of this kind.

The chapter on coconuts is perhaps rather better balanced than those on tea and rubber—possibly because a less bewildering array of technical publications exists.

The chapter entitled "Cultivation and Manuring", contains much valuable information. Being of a general character it is suggested that it might be better inserted *before* the chapters dealing with particular crops.

The next chapter is headed "Planting Diseases and Pests". As these have already been dealt with under the crops concerned one wonders what the contents of this chapter is to be. Actually the chapter contains an account of one pest only (termites), and no diseases; the remainder of the chapter is occupied with plant pest and disease legislation. The latter is a most necessary inclusion but if a chapter under this heading is to be included, it would possibly be better to have relegated *all* accounts and publications dealing with pests and disease to this chapter. Alternatively all diseases and pests might be included under the chapters on the crops to which they chiefly apply and the legislative portion might be transferred to the later chapter on legal matters.

The chapter on medical matters is most comprehensive, but here again the particular precedes the general: the chapter starts with a description of hookworm, while some pages later are found sections entitled "*Simple Rules of Health*", and "*How to Avoid Diseases*".

The chapters on the diseases of animals, electricity, and book-keeping all gain in conciseness, lucidity, and value from a lack of multiplicity of authors.

Rutherford's Planters' Note Book has been of unquestionable value to generations of planters but it is certain that its value could be greatly enhanced and, at the same time, its bulk considerably reduced by better balance and arrangement, by more specially written articles by experts, and by a more judicious selection of literature to be included.—T.H.H.